

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

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1. An optical amplifier comprising:
first and second optical amplifier units;
a variable optical attenuator optically coupled
between the first and second optical amplifier
10 units;

a first control unit to control gains of the
first and second optical amplifier units based on an
input of the first optical amplifier unit and an
output of the second optical amplifier unit; and
15 a second control unit to control an attenuation
quantity of the variable optical attenuator based on
the input and an output of the first optical
amplifier unit and an input and the output of the
second optical amplifier unit.

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2. The optical amplifier as claimed in
25 claim 1, further comprising:

first and second photodetectors to convert the
input and the output of the first optical amplifier
unit into electrical signals, respectively; and
third and fourth photodetectors to convert the
30 input and the output of the second optical amplifier
unit into electrical signals, respectively,
said first and fourth photodetectors supplying
the electrical signals output therefrom to the first
control unit,
35 said first through fourth photodetectors
supplying the electrical signals output therefrom to
the second control unit.

3. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 2, wherein the first control unit includes means for controlling the first and second optical amplifier units so that a level difference of the electrical signals output from the first and fourth photodetectors match a set value.

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4. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 2, wherein the second control unit includes means for controlling the attenuation quantity of the variable optical attenuator so that a sum of a level difference between the electrical signals output from the first and second photodetectors and a level difference between the electrical signals output from the third and fourth photodetectors becomes constant.

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5. An optical amplifier comprising:
25 first and second optical amplifier units;
a first variable optical attenuator to attenuate an output of the first optical amplifier unit;
a second variable optical attenuator to
30 attenuate an input of the first optical amplifier unit;
a first control unit to control gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on an output of the second variable optical attenuator and
35 an output of the second optical amplifier unit; and
a second control unit to control attenuation quantities of the first and second variable optical

attenuators based on the input and the output of the optical amplifier unit and an input and the output of the second optical amplifier unit.

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6. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 5, further comprising:

10 first and second photodetectors to convert the input and the output of the first optical amplifier unit into electrical signals;

a third photodetector to convert the output of the second variable optical attenuator into an
15 electrical signal; and

fourth and fifth photodetectors to convert the input and the output of the second optical amplifier unit into electrical signals,

said third and fifth photodetectors supplying
20 the electrical signals output therefrom to the first control unit,

said first, second, fourth and fifth photodetectors supplying the electrical signals output therefrom to the second control unit.

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7. An optical amplifier comprising:

30 first and second optical amplifier units;

a variable optical attenuator to attenuate an input and an output of the first optical amplifier unit;

a first control unit to control gains of the
35 first and second optical amplifier units based on the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been attenuated by the variable optical

attenuator and an output of the second optical amplifier unit; and

5 a second control unit to control an attenuation quantity of the variable optical attenuator based on the input of the first optical amplifier unit, the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been attenuated by the variable optical attenuator and the output of the second optical amplifier unit.

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8. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 7, further comprising:

15 a first photodetector to convert the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been attenuated by the variable optical attenuator into an electrical signal;

20 a second photodetector to convert the input of the first optical amplifier unit into an electrical signal; and

a third photodetector to convert the output of the second optical amplifier unit into an electrical signal,

25 said first and third photodetectors supplying the electrical signals output therefrom to the first control unit,

30 said first, second and third photodetectors supplying the electrical signals output therefrom to the second control unit.

35 9. An optical amplifier comprising:
first and second optical amplifier units;
a first variable optical attenuator to

attenuate an output of the first optical amplifier unit;

5 a second variable optical attenuator to attenuate an input of the first optical amplifier unit;

10 a first control unit to control gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on an output of the second variable optical attenuator and an output of the second optical amplifier unit; and
15 a second control unit to control attenuation quantities of the first and second variable optical attenuators based on the output of the second variable optical attenuator, the output of the second optical amplifier unit and characteristics of the first and second variable optical attenuators.

20 10. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 9, further comprising:

a first photodetector to convert the output of the second variable optical attenuator into an electrical signal; and

25 a second photodetector to convert the output of the second optical amplifier unit into an electrical signal,

30 said first and second photodetectors supplying the electrical signals output therefrom to each of the first and second control units.

35 11. An optical amplifier comprising:
first and second optical amplifier units;
a variable optical attenuator to attenuate an

input and an output of the first optical amplifier unit;

5 a first control unit to control gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been attenuated by the variable optical attenuator and an output of the second optical amplifier unit; and

10 a second control unit to control an attenuation quantity of the variable optical attenuator based on the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been attenuated by the variable optical attenuator, the output of the second optical amplifier unit, and a characteristic of the variable
15 optical attenuator.

20 12. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 11, further comprising:

a first photodetector to convert the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been attenuated by the variable optical attenuator into
25 an electrical signal; and

a second photodetector to convert the output of the second optical amplifier unit into an electrical signal,

30 said first and second photodetectors supplying the electrical signals output therefrom to each of the first and second control units.

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13. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first control unit controls the

gains of the first and second optical amplifier units so that an output power of said optical amplifier becomes constant, and the second control unit controls the attenuation quantity of the
5 variable optical attenuator so that a sum of the gains of the first and second optical amplifier units becomes constant.

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14. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 5, wherein the first control unit controls the gains of the first and second optical amplifier
15 units so that an output power of said optical amplifier becomes constant, and the second control unit controls the attenuation quantities of the first and second variable optical attenuators so that a sum of the gains of the first and second
20 optical amplifier units becomes constant.

25 15. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 7, wherein the first control unit controls the gains of the first and second optical amplifier units so that an output power of said optical amplifier becomes constant, and the second control
30 unit controls the attenuation quantity of the variable optical attenuator so that a sum of the gains of the first and second optical amplifier units becomes constant.

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16. The optical amplifier as claimed in
claim 9, wherein the first control unit controls the
gains of the first and second optical amplifier
units so that an output power of said optical
5 amplifier becomes constant, and the second control
unit controls the attenuation quantities of the
first and second variable optical attenuators so
that a sum of the gains of the first and second
optical amplifier units becomes constant.
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17. The optical amplifier as claimed in
15 claim 11, wherein the first control unit controls
the gains of the first and second optical amplifier
units so that an output power of said optical
amplifier becomes constant, and the second control
unit controls the attenuation quantity of the
20 variable optical attenuator so that a sum of the
gains of the first and second optical amplifier
units becomes constant.

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18. The optical amplifier as claimed in
claim 13, wherein:
each of the first and second optical amplifier
30 units includes an optical amplifying medium and a
pump light source to supply a pump light to the
optical amplifying medium, and
the gain of each of the first and second
optical amplifier units is controlled by an optical
35 power of the pump light output from the pump light
source thereof.

19. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 14, wherein:

each of the first and second optical amplifier units includes an optical amplifying medium and a
5 pump light source to supply a pump light to the optical amplifying medium, and

the gain of each of the first and second optical amplifier units is controlled by an optical power of the pump light output from the pump light
10 source thereof.

15 20. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 15, wherein:

each of the first and second optical amplifier units includes an optical amplifying medium and a
20 pump light source to supply a pump light to the optical amplifying medium, and

the gain of each of the first and second optical amplifier units is controlled by an optical power of the pump light output from the pump light source thereof.

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21. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 16, wherein:

each of the first and second optical amplifier units includes an optical amplifying medium and a
30 pump light source to supply a pump light to the optical amplifying medium, and

the gain of each of the first and second optical amplifier units is controlled by an optical power of the pump light output from the pump light
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source thereof.

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22. The optical amplifier as claimed in claim 17, wherein:

each of the first and second optical amplifier units includes an optical amplifying medium and a pump light source to supply a pump light to the optical amplifying medium, and

the gain of each of the first and second optical amplifier units is controlled by an optical power of the pump light output from the pump light source thereof.

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23. An optical amplifier control method for controlling an optical amplifier having first and second optical amplifier units and a variable optical attenuator optically coupled between the first and second optical amplifier units,

25 comprising:

controlling gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on an input of the first optical amplifier unit and an output of the second optical amplifier unit; and

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controlling an attenuation quantity of the variable optical attenuator based on the input and an output of the first optical amplifier unit and an input and the output of the second optical amplifier unit.

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24. The optical amplifier control method as claimed in claim 23, wherein:

the controlling gains controls the gains of the first and second optical amplifier units so that an
5 output power of the optical amplifier becomes constant, and

the controlling an attenuation quantity controls the attenuation quantity of the variable optical attenuator so that a sum of the gains of the
10 first and second optical amplifier units becomes constant.

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25. The optical amplifier control method as claimed in claim 24, wherein:

each of the first and second optical amplifier units includes an optical amplifying medium and a
20 pump light source to supply a pump light to the optical amplifying medium, and

the controlling gains controls the gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on an optical power of the pump light output from the pump
25 light source of each of the first and second optical amplifier units.

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26. The optical amplifier control method as claimed in claim 23, further comprising:

converting the input and the output of the first optical amplifier unit into first and second
35 electrical signals, respectively; and

converting the input and the output of the second optical amplifier unit into third and fourth

electrical signals, respectively,

the controlling gains includes being supplied with the first and fourth electrical signals,

the controlling an attenuation quantity
5 includes being supplied with the first through fourth electrical signals.

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27. The optical amplifier control method as claimed in claim 26, wherein the controlling gains includes controlling the first and second optical amplifier units so that a level difference
15 between the first and fourth electrical signals match a set value.

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28. The optical amplifier control method as claimed in claim 26, wherein the controlling an attenuation quantity includes controlling the attenuation quantity of the variable optical
25 attenuator so that a sum of a level difference between the first and second electrical signals and a level difference between the third and fourth electrical signals becomes constant.

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29. An optical amplifier control method for controlling an optical amplifier having first
35 and second optical amplifier units, a first variable optical attenuator to attenuate an output of the first optical amplifier unit and a second variable

optical attenuator to attenuate an input of the first optical amplifier unit, comprising:

controlling gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on an output of the second variable optical attenuator and an output of the second optical amplifier unit; and

controlling attenuation quantities of the first and second variable optical attenuators based on the input and the output of the optical amplifier unit and an input and the output of the second optical amplifier unit.

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30. An optical amplifier control method for controlling an optical amplifier having first and second optical amplifier units and a variable optical attenuator to attenuate an input and an output of the first optical amplifier unit, comprising:

controlling gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been attenuated by the variable optical attenuator and an output of the second optical amplifier unit; and

controlling an attenuation quantity of the variable optical attenuator based on the input of the first optical amplifier unit, the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been attenuated by the variable optical attenuator and the output of the second optical amplifier unit.

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31. An optical amplifier control method

for controlling an optical amplifier having first and second optical amplifier units, a first variable optical attenuator to attenuate an output of the first optical amplifier unit and a second variable
5 optical attenuator to attenuate an input of the first optical amplifier unit, comprising:

controlling gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on an output of the second variable optical attenuator and an output of
10 the second optical amplifier unit; and

controlling attenuation quantities of the first and second variable optical attenuators based on the output of the second variable optical attenuator, the output of the second optical amplifier unit and
15 characteristics of the first and second variable optical attenuators.

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32. An optical amplifier control method for controlling an optical amplifier having first and second optical amplifier units and a variable optical attenuator to attenuate an input and an
25 output of the first optical amplifier unit, comprising:

controlling gains of the first and second optical amplifier units based on the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been
30 attenuated by the variable optical attenuator and an output of the second optical amplifier unit; and

controlling an attenuation quantity of the variable optical attenuator based on the input of the first optical amplifier unit which has been
35 attenuated by the variable optical attenuator, the output of the second optical amplifier unit, and a characteristic of the variable optical attenuator.